

Political Thought of Iqbal

(An Exploration)

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Abstract:

Allama Muhammad Iqbal is a celebrated philosopher, mystic, theologian, politician, and a wisdom poet of modern Muslim world. He struggled for the academic enhancement, moral development, political independence, solidarity, freedom, and sovereignty of the Muslim world. He put his emphasis on philosophy and science i.e. along with revelation. Although Iqbal has derived his political vision from the teachings of Quran but he enriched it with all treasures of knowledge of the East and the West specifically with the vision of Syed Jamal al Din Afghani. He admired Afghani as the genius of modern Muslim world. According to Quran, politics and affairs of state are a section of the multidimensional teachings of Islam. To fulfill the will of God, to govern the system of state, to provide equal opportunities to all beings with all justice, and to maintain peace, harmony, and discipline in this world, Islam provides a political guidance. Iqbal tried to reevaluate it according to the needs of time.

Key Words: State, Church, Priest hood, Monasticism, dictatorship, Spiritual, material Prologue

[Introduction]

Distinguish feature of a human being is reason. It differentiates it from all other creatures. The prominent characteristic of reason is the harmonization between thought and action of a being. Reason plays a key role to civilize a being and society. When this feature collectively emerges in the circles of daily life to organize the activities of masses it gives birth to a political system or to a system of state. This ideological approach and practical behavior emanates from the faith or the philosophy of a being.

[Main Debate]

In this respect there are two main approaches i.e.

- Revealed Religions. In this respect there are two leading doctrines.
 - i. Islam
 - ii. Judaism and Christianity
- Philosophy. It is also consisted of two main eras.
 - i. Greek Philosophy
 - ii. Modern Western Thought

Now we discuss about the attitude of religion and philosophy in respect of human being and his role in this universe. Human Being and Sacred Book Let us start from Christianity. The Sacred Book narrates the story of creation in these words. At first God stationed to first being i.e. Adam A.S. with his companion (wife) in heavens with some rules and regulations. They disobey their Lord and crossed their limits. So, He descended them to this world as a punishment. Lord held this world a place of chastisement for the first disobedient couple (forefathers of humankind) and for their descendants. So an antagonism started between humankind and their Lord from the very first day. We may conclude to this story of creation as:

- There was a wisdom tree in heaven. God stationed to first couple (Adam A.S. and Eve) in heaven with some liberties and restrictions i.e. they were allowed to eat every-thing except the fruit of wisdom tree. They ate the fruit of wisdom tree which was prohibited for them and in this way they got the wisdom to differentiate good from evil like God. So, they displeased to their Lord.

- They (both Adam and Eve-the first human pair) were expelled from heaven due to their above said first disobedience.

- There was another tree of eternal life. Now it was the possibility that Adam and Eve will try to eat the fruit of the tree of eternal life to be eternal like God. So, to prevent it from the first human couple, God appointed the angels at the Eastern side of the Garden. There were flaming swords revolving all around the tree of eternal life to block the way of first human pair. (Bible, 1916:5-9)

This story represents an antagonism between God and Adam. Due to this antagonism a continuous rift, confrontation, conflict, clash, and war state established between God and human being. Further it emerged in all spheres of life i.e. in the form of a division between spiritual and material, religious and worldly, divine and human, and Church and state. According to Iqbal there is a lot of difference between the approaches of both the sacred books Old Testament and Quran in respect of the legend of fall. He commented on

this event in the following way. “But confining ourselves to the Semitic form of the myth, it is highly probable that it arose out of the primitive man’s desire to explain to himself the infinite misery of his plight in an uncongenial environment, which abounded in diseases and death and obstructed him on all sides in his endeavor to maintain himself. Having no control over the forces of nature, a pessimistic view of life was perfectly natural to him. Thus, in an old Babylonian inscription, we find the serpent (phallic), the tree, and a woman offering an apple (symbol of virginity) to the man. The meaning of the myth is clear—the fall of man from a supposed state of bliss was due to the original sexual act of human pair. The way in which the Qur’an handles this legend becomes clear when we compare it with the narration of the book of Genesis. The remarkable points of difference between the Quranic and the Biblical narrations suggest unmistakably the purpose of the Quranic narration.” (Iqbal A. M., 1989:66)

Human Being and Philosophy As for as, philosophy is concerned, chronologically we may divide it into following ages i.e. ancient, medieval, renaissance, early modern, and modern. (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000:690) Almost all manmade political systems revolve around these three main approaches, conservatism, socialism, and liberalism (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000:693) even we may observe their reflection in classical republicanism, Roman law, natural law, and utilitarianism. According to its own claim the origin of modern Western philosophy is Greek. Renaissance grew on the heels of ancient Greek philosophy. Medieval period is the age of scholasticism i.e. dark age of philosophy. Reformation accelerated to the confrontation and division of secular and sacred. (Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2000:691)

According to Plato, reality was in another world. Aristotle fell in the trap of form and matter. In respect of human being he viewed that human being is a social animal. Medieval Christianity promoted to monasticism. To establish a discipline and order in all spheres of life institutionalization is necessary while monasticism is the negation of all social activities. In this situation gradually new political philosophies emerged. Dictionary of philosophy summed up this discussion as

- Aristotle held human being a social animal. This view played a fundamental role in the determination of the role of human being in this universe and his/her relationship with God, other beings and universe.
- A conflict emerged between state and church. Church declared to earthly state as satanic. In the result of this conflict new approaches established in respect of the nature of state.
- Thomas Aquinas observed that the source of power was people and they had the right to determine, manage, govern, and control it. This approach continued to flourish further.
- A new era of political philosophy started after renaissance.
- Machiavelli and Bodin emphasized on the sovereignty and solidarity of state and on the rights of people.

- Hobbes, Lock, and Rousseau introduced the theory of social contract. It circumscribed to unlimited imperial power and promoted to democratic trends.

- Meanwhile an idea of natural law emerged in opposition to Divine law.

- Hegel declared to state as an ultimate end while Marx and Engels held that ultimate object of state was to establish a classless society. At the achievement of this goal there will be no need of state. At this stage they considered state useless and predicted the end of state.

- In nineteenth century, political philosophers held to state the source of all power and gave it all authority and complete sovereignty. (Qadir C.A, 1994:343)

So, in the perspective of above said discussion we may say that in respect of human being, his/her attitude, life style, social and cultural behavior, ideologically and practically two approaches are in practice i.e.

- Interpretation of life and universe on Divine basis

- Understanding of life and universe on Greek cum modern interpretations

Existing political cum economic systems i.e. Western democratic systems, Socialism, and Communism, have been derived from Greek to some extent. Basis of all manmade ideologies and philosophical systems is a material interpretation of this universe. From ancient Greek to modern world i.e. Aristotle to Darwin human being has the material basis only. Aristotle defined human being as a Social Animal. With the passage of time, along with the development of science, negation of all sources of knowledge except sense perception, and elimination of religion from politics to all affairs of life, this concept of Aristotle gradually molded into Darwinian Theory of Evolution. In the West, after renaissance all thinkers and philosophers discussed and viewed about human being as a material being only. The focus of all intellectual activities was on matter. For scientists and reformers human being was only a material object. So, all technology, discoveries and inventions of science were to facilitate a material object. There was no room for any other approach about life, universe, beginning, and end. For example in 1943 a well-known anthropologist Abraham H. Maslow presented his famous theory Hierarchy of Needs. In this theory he pointed out five basic needs of a being. It is interesting that he considered human being a material object only and his theory is based on the perception that human being was only a material entity which had no other aspect. (Tahir, 1985:9)

After renaissance the West entered in a new and the most crucial phase of its intellectual life i.e. a division of Church and state which reshaped all social and cultural scenarios of an individual and society. Religion became a personal affair. There was no right to Church to interfere in the affairs of state. Theoretically philosophy and practically science became the fountain heads of all norms, standards, criteria, and values. Divinity was deprived of to regulate the affairs. So, modern political systems (capitalistic democratic systems on one side and socialist and communist republicans system on the other end) emerged from the materialistic interpretations of life and universe rather than spiritual. These political systems served to their

nations materially but they deprived of them spiritually. Values became subjective. System should not follow to values but values should follow to system. But in new interpretations of life and universe values are going to follow subjective values. Subsequently these societies felled in spiritual crises. According to Richard Nixon: "In my first inaugural address twenty years ago, I said: To a crisis of spirit we need an answer of the spirit. That was true then and that is true today". (Hussain, 1998:31)

Islam and Political Thought

Quran presents a complete code of life which encircles to all aspects of personality, all corners of life, and all dimensions of universe. Iqbal has rightly elaborated this fact in his lectures. (First Lecture) There are number of verses of the Holy Quran which illuminate to this aspect. For Islam, Quran has used the term Din, which is comprehensive than all other terms like faith, belief, and religion. Here we quote a verse of Quran which reflects the gist of divine guidance under the title of Islam. There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelievers in the Shaitan and believers in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing. (M.H, 2:256) Above said verse of the Holy Quran guides us towards following conclusions.

- There is a tolerance in Din i.e. Islam
- It is rational
- It is a complete system of guidance
- Every approach other than Din is seduction
- Having belief in Allah means to be undefeatable
- It provides firm and sound basis
- Almighty Allah is Omnipotent and Omniscient
- Islam encircles to all aspects of personality i.e. spiritual, material, individual, collective, personal, social, internal, and external

It means Islam encompasses all aspects of life i.e. the life in this world, the life before this world, and life after this world. (The confession of Islam necessitates to its follower to have a faith in life before this world, life in this world, and life after this world.) Adam A.S. is the first being in this world. In Quran Allah has narrated his story in detail. He declared him his vicegerent in earth. His representation is related with the life of all the worlds. Political Thought of Iqbal We may encircle to whole history of Muslim world in three ages: Classical (the era of peak), Medieval (the days of decline), Modern (the age of renaissance). Syed Jamal al Din Afghani is known as the father of Modern Muslim world. He set the foundations of renaissance of Muslim world. He struggled throughout the Muslim world. (Unluckily he remained alien for Muslim lands while the West realized his mission.) He struggled for the political independence, solidarity, freedom, and sovereignty of the Muslim world. He put his emphasis on science and reason along with revelation. Iqbal-a celebrated philosopher, mystic, theologian, politician, and a wisdom poet of modern Muslim world is his real precursor. He admired Afghani as the genius of modern Muslim world. Although Iqbal has derived his political vision from the teachings of Quran

but he enriched it with all treasuries of knowledge of the east and the West specifically with the vision of Syed Jamal al Din Afghani. (Iqbal A. D., Harf e Iqbal, 1984:137)

Iqbal describes that the Islam's concept of religion is comprehensive than all other approaches. (Iqbal A. M., 1963:224) According to Quran, politics and affairs of state are a section of the multidimensional teachings of Islam. To fulfill the will of God, to govern the system of state, to provide equal opportunities to all beings with all justice, and to maintain peace, harmony, and discipline in this world, Islam provides a political guidance. Iqbal tried to reevaluate it according to the needs of time. In this respect he starts his discussion by describing the concept of Tauhid (concept of God) and determining the role of being in this universe in the light of Quran. Here is the conclusion of his standpoint in this regard.

- God is One (Quran, 112:1)
- Allah is the light of all heavens and earth (Quran,24:35)
- The heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to bear the burden of God's trust while human being received it voluntarily (Quran,33:72)
- Human being (Adam A.S.) is the chosen of God and God guided him (Quran,20:122)
- Human being is a representative of God on earth and God will test him by what He has given to him (Quran,6:166)
- God has made the soul perfect. He, who purifies it, is successful and he, who corrupts it is looser (Quran,91:7-10)
- Human being has not turned away from heavens with contempt and this world is not a place of chastisement for him
- The origin of human being and of everything of this world is spiritual (Iqbal A. M., 1989:122)
- For the development of an individual, for a peaceful and purposeful universe we will have to interpret an individual and this universe on spiritual basis (Iqbal A. M., 1989:122)
- We will have to develop all human societies on spiritual basis (Iqbal A. M., 1989:123)

We may sum up all above discussion in these words. According to Iqbal, Almighty Allah is the origin of every-thing. Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. He has made human being on the best make. (Quran, 95:4) Human being is His representative in this world. Among whole creature only human being received His trust voluntarily and only he is the bearer of His trust on earth. He favored human being with a lot of blessings. Human being is not an expelled and rejected being. His fallen to this world is not as a chastisement. He is the representative of God on earth. He has to live in this world according to the will of God. He has to work hard to govern this universe according to the will of God. He has to prove that he deserves this designation i.e. a vicegerent of God. He has to fulfill the will of God in this universe by providing a moral, ethical, peaceful, just, and safe and sound environment with all opportunities to all beings with-out any discrimination. To fulfill this will of God Iqbal presents a socio cum philosophical system. This system is consisted of two steps i.e.

- i. Development of an individual (by the development of self, inner self, personality, or ego (Iqbal A. D., Shuzrat e Fikr e Iqbal, 1983:78)
- ii. Building of an ideal society by the developed individuals

The Origin of Human Being

According to Islam human being is a masterpiece among all other creation. Its origin is divine and its basis is spiritual. This is the basic point of Iqbal's philosophy. For him God is an absolute spirit. God is the origin of everything. He has the absolute creator. So, everything is spiritual by its very nature. Now the question arises, what will be the basis of the development of this being? All ancient Greek, modern West and socialist and communist societies made a lot of efforts for the development and grooming of an individual. But all have considered human being only a material object and a social animal. Materiality provokes to selfishness while spirituality nourishes to sacrifice. So for Iqbal for the development of a beneficial individual and for the building of an everlasting welfare society we should consider human being a spiritual object. Spirit has no color, no boundary and no limit. So spiritually developed being would be beneficial for whole humanity without any discrimination. Consequently a society built by spiritually developed beings would be advantageous to fulfill the will of God in this universe. The West and Separation between Church and State As we discussed in previously to some extent in medieval ages in all personal and social dimensions the approach of Christianity was monastic. All authority was for priests and authenticity was for religious institutions. All institutions were bound to follow priests" and church. All rational and scientific activities were prohibited by religious authorities. Society became stagnant. The movements of renaissance and reformation broken away respectively from stagnant religious atmosphere of the medieval ages and changed the intellectual and religious scenario of the West. Iqbal pointed out to this phenomenon as, "Primitive Christianity was founded, not as a political or civil unit, but as a monastic order in a profane world, having nothing to do with civil affairs, and obeying the Roman authority practically in all matters. The result of this was that when the state became Christian, state and Church confronted each other as distinct powers with interminable boundary disputes between them". (Iqbal A. M., 1989: 123)

The Ills of Muslim World

Iqbal pointed out that there were three main ills of Muslim society i.e. Priesthood, Monastic Sufism, and Dictatorship. He condemned strongly to these ills of Muslim society. He held that these are the major reasons of decline of the Muslim world. For him these are as dangerous for a Muslim society as the separation between state and Church is harmful for the Western lands. "The ultimate reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is, therefore, sacred in the roots of its being. The greatest service that modern thought has rendered to Islam, and as a matter of fact to all religion, consists in its criticism of what we call material or natural-a criticism which discloses that the merely material has no substance until we discover it rooted in the spiritual. There is no such thing as the profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit. All is holy ground. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it „The whole of this earth is a mosque.“ The state, according to Islam, is only an effort to realize the spiritual in a human organization. But in this sense all state, not based on mere domination and aiming at the realization of ideal principles, is theocratic.” (Iqbal A. M., 1989:123) Iqbal considers necessary the structuring of a state but he condemns to all forms of state established on the material interpretation of the universe. Even he criticized to all democratic forms based on bare human intellect only. He proposed to spiritual democracy-a form of government whose ultimate end is absolute reality-an Ultimate Spirit. Concluding Remarks

- For Iqbal the origin and ultimate goal of this universe is ultimate Spirit i.e. God.
- Human being is a masterpiece of His creation.
- He held human being as His vicegerent on earth.
- Human being has to fulfill God's will on earth.
- Human being has two dimensions: both spiritual and material.
- In respect of his origin human being is spiritual while in respect of his field of action he is material because he has to fulfill Gods will in this material world.
- From Aristotle to modern ages almost all rationalist and empiricists considered human being a material object only.
- They interpreted to whole phenomenon of existence on material basis only.
- So, matter was considered a spring of all individual, collective, personal, social, moral, economical, political, and cultural activities.
- Resultantly they separated church from state i.e. religion from worldly affairs.
- Iqbal was of opinion that all problems of humanity in all ages were due to the material interpretation of life and universe.
- Along with all other harmful issues the most fatal among all is the spiritual crises of modern being.
- The nature of the problems of Muslim world is different from the West. Majority of the Muslim world is occupied by the most harmful

diseases which corrupt the human societies are Priest Hood, Monastic Sufism, and Dictatorship.

- For Iqbal democratic form of government is the best way among all other approaches to govern the system but he differentiates between material democracy and spiritual democracy.

- For him material democracy is as harmful for human societies as are the priesthood, monastic Sufism, and dictatorship. Spiritual democracy is the only option by which we save the future of humanity.

- For spiritual democracy we will have to admit that the ultimate origin of all existents is spiritual. On the heels of this acknowledgement we will have to develop individuals, build up societies and interpret all phenomenon of creation on spiritual basis with in the material world.

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